



**Maud S. Mandel**

May 19, 2020, 3:31 PM (2 days ago)

to WILLIAMS-ALL

Dear members of the Williams Community,

As I announced to you previously, in April I charged a working group with identifying the operational requirements Williams would have to be able to satisfy before we could consider opening for a residential fall semester.

Today I'm writing to announce the model that the college will employ for the 2020-21 academic year, regardless of whether we hold fall courses in person or remotely, and to introduce a second working group that will develop plans for implementing this approach if we're unable to hold in-person classes in Fall 2020 or Spring 2021.

In terms of the model, for 2020-21 only we'll continue with two semesters as usual, but will reduce the minimum number of required courses per semester from four to three and will cancel Winter Study for January 2021. These changes will maximize flexibility for students and limit the amount of time people are required to spend on campus, independently of whether we convene in person or work remotely.

The idea arose from extensive discussions with Senior Staff and representatives of the faculty, including three elected members of the FSC, the chairs of two elected committees that deal with curriculum (the Curricular Planning Committee and Committee on Educational Affairs), and the chair of the Honor and Discipline Committee. This group considered data from the student survey on remote learning and the *Record's* student poll about next fall, as well as significant faculty and staff feedback. A two-semester model with reduced per-semester credit requirements and more space in the calendar offers the greatest latitude to meet diverse needs without compromising the quality of our education.

Here's how the working group will investigate some of the model's major implications, especially on the faculty side:

- In collaboration with the [Office of the Dean of Faculty](#), they'll reach out to faculty, departments, and programs to evaluate the implications for class size, sequencing, major requirements, honors processes and pedagogy, among other issues.
- In collaboration with the [Committee on Appointments and Promotions](#), they'll address questions of faculty workload and evaluation.
- Finally, they'll survey faculty, staff and students about the model's possible impact on our diverse community. The data from their research will inform our thinking about how to support everyone at Williams. Please look for details about their survey soon.

As you may have noticed, the model also depends on a further change to college policies: reducing the minimum number of credits required per semester will entail also lowering the total number of courses required for graduation. This would have to apply to all students enrolled during academic year 2020-21. Faculty will vote on this matter, and will soon receive a letter from the Faculty Steering Committee about how deliberations will be organized.

Meanwhile, the working group will get underway. Their brief is ambitious, especially since I [promised](#) to announce a plan for fall by July 1. With that in mind, I want to introduce and thank the group, which was developed in partnership with the Faculty Steering Committee. It will be co-chaired by Professor of Psychology and incoming Dean of the Faculty Safa Zaki and Professor of Classics and Chair of Classics and the Jewish Studies Program Edan Dekel, and includes the faculty, staff and student representatives listed below. My gratitude goes out to all of them for committing to this project. The President's Office will provide administrative support for their work.

In keeping with our regular practice, we've set up a [web page](#) where you can find the group's charge and roster, along with a [feedback form](#). They will engage in community outreach as part of their process, so please look for announcements in Daily Messages about the opportunities and contribute however you can. Your input will help us identify the many questions we need to answer in order to implement the plan effectively.

Members of our community have expressed a combination of hopes and worries about the fall. As I've

said repeatedly, Williams should be guided in such moments by our mission and our commitment to care for our people. The findings of the two working groups will help me judge, in discussion with the faculty, which fall option best serves those values while responsibly limiting risk. I appreciate everything these contributors are doing for us, and for Williams.

As ever, I want to conclude by thanking all of you, too, for your ongoing efforts to maintain the Williams spirit throughout these difficult days.

Maud

### **Working group for curricular planning 2020-21**

- Robert Baker-White '80, Professor of Theatre
- Edan Dekel, Chair and Professor of Classics and Chair of Jewish Studies Program (co-chair)
- Kath Dunlop, Registrar
- Onder Kilinc '23
- Barron Koralesky, Chief Information Officer
- Gretchen Long, Professor of History and Faculty Fellow of the Davis Center and the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Tiku Majumder, Barclay Jermain Professor of Natural Philosophy and Director of the Science Center
- Gabby Martin '21
- Carolyn Miles, Assistant Professor of Physical Education and Associate Director of Athletics for Student Athlete Services
- Jonathan Miller, Director of Libraries
- Ngonidzashe Munemo, Professor of Political Science and Associate Dean for Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Christopher Sewell '05, Associate Dean of the College
- Janneke van de Stadt, Chair of German and Russian and Professor of Russian
- G.L.M. Wallace, Director of Accessible Education
- Safa Zaki, Professor of Psychology, Chair of Cognitive Science Program, and incoming Dean of the Faculty (co-chair)